

# HELLRAISER 2

It's a bright, sunny day at Britain's famous Pinewood Studios situated just seventeen miles outside central London. Spring has just begun and the day seems so friendly one wouldn't suspect that just a stroll away, along endless corridors through heavy, vault-like doors, lies a sinister realm. This is Midian, a netherworld of mutilated beings who dwell underground, beneath these tangled branches, hoary trees and slanted tombstones.

This misty graveyard is one of the sets of writer/director Clive Barker's latest horror film, *Hellraiser II*. Based upon his best-selling novel *Cabal*, *Hellraiser II* follows the adventures of Boone, a young man accused of multiple murder. Escaping from the asylum where he is imprisoned, Boone — pursued by his psychoanalyst, the law and his girlfriend Lori — finds refuge in the mythical land Midian, an alternative culture of distressed souls in perverse physical forms. The catch for hero Boone is that in order to find sanctuary in Midian, he too must die.

Playing Boone is the 28-year-old American actor Craig Sheffer, best known for his role in *That Was Then, This Is Now* (co-starring with Emilio Estevez). Twigs snapping with every footfall, Sheffer stalks the pine-scented movie set with a relaxed attitude and dry humour sharply at odds with his appearance — he sports a horrific chest wound, the bloody bullet holes which have punctured his shirt easily visible beneath his leather jacket. So why did Sheffer, six year veteran of off-Broadway theatre productions, commercials and dramatic films, decide to "go horror"?

"Basically, I thought the script was outrageous," deadpans Sheffer in his flat Pennsylvanian accent " . . . and really interesting. My character, Boone, has a history of schizophrenia and manic depression and he's just started to get better over the last year. But he has blackouts all the time and has been set up to think he's a mass murderer.

Countdown goes on the set of *Hellraiser II*, the gory, spooky, creepy, special FX-y sequel to the horror hit *Hellraiser*.

"Then the script takes a great turn into this place called Midian where bad people go. It's like the world of the undead with eternal life. It was pretty weird." Sheffer laughs, "but before I auditioned for the part, my agent said I really should see Barker's first movie. So I rented *Hellraiser* and after that, I figured whatever this amazing guy does. I wanted to be a part of it."

Being "part of it" involved more than learning lines and cues. The hero gets bitten by one of the monsters in Midian and, vampire-like, turns into one. The physical transformation of Boone into the undead Cabal meant there were many mornings when Sheffer had







to be at the studio early for the application of the six-piece prosthetic makeup (which was based roughly upon Aboriginal tattoos). Sheffer's full-face mask was spirit-gummed into place where it would stay from 3 in the morning until 10 at night.

Besides Boone's inventive facelift, there are over 200 weird, wild and wonderful entities — a new record for one film — both starring and lurking around in *Hellraiser II* which have been created by Barker's "brainstorming sessions" with his special effects team, "creature crew" wizards Bob Keen and Geoff Portass, as well as an army of animatronics technicians. In fact, it is the same group who gave moviegoers the creeps with the original *Hellraiser*, Barker's enormously successful first feature.

In *Hellraiser*, a pleasure-loving man has his flesh torn from his body (with fish-hooks!) by evil nether-creatures called Cenobites. Though less ghoulish than its predecessor, *Hellraiser II* features Midian as a place full of horrific creatures who are in many ways preferable to the evil in humankind. The real monster of the story is a human: Decker, Boone's psychiatrist, brings new meaning to the word diabolical. Portraying Decker is director David Cronenberg in his first starring role. The creator of such classics as *Scanners*, *The Brood*, *Rabid*, *The Dead Zone*, *The Fly* and *Dead Ringers*, Cronenberg was chosen for the part because, in the words of his pal Barker, "You see him in interviews and he's urbane, he's witty and dry — and then he makes *Scanners* where everybody's head explodes. Decker has this very good social front as a highly paid analyst and at the same time he's a mass murderer and nobody knows." Makeup-wise, Decker's psychotic alter ego is represented by Buttonhead, a cloth mask with a crooked zipper mouth and savagely criss-crossed button eyes which give a frightening impression of sadistic blindness. It is easy to see why both Barker and Cronenberg are pleased with the results — the effect is very scary.

The feeling on the *Hellraiser II* set is one of light-hearted, fast-paced confidence with director Barker joking along with the crew. In one instance, when asking everyone to keep quiet and stay out of the line of the cameras without success, Barker asks everyone — but everyone — to come into the line of the camera and make a hellacious racket. After the laughter, relieving the pressure of a tight shooting schedule, the work continues undisturbed.

With its expected technical brilliance, Barker's solid script and direction, *Hellraiser II* promises to be just as frightening, imaginative and complex as the first *Hellraiser*, perhaps even more so as it contains a love story, albeit a strange one. As Boone and Lori stay in Midian, becoming more and more in love with each other, they also become less 'human'. In fact, they become very dead indeed. The climaxes of *Hellraiser II* are not like the original film's resplendent gore, they are about emotions: heroism, romance and honesty. In Barker's universe, monsters are more human than the humans.

Karen Krisanovich

